



Minding the Gap - December 2014

A Faith and Work Publication

Welcome to Minding the Gap, a monthly thought about faith in the workplace!

"Subsidiarity!?"

At the November Faith & Work Gathering, this term of "subsidiarity" was discussed as a concept for helping to bring about "shalom" (peace, well-being, safety, harmony, justice, etc) within the work place. My understanding of this term subsidiarity is that it is a perspective and effort to take the responsibility for making a decision to the lowest or closest point of the issue - given that the resources/competency exists at that point.

Allow me to tell a story from my work experience, which illustrates this idea of subsidiarity and how it might have helped to bring about a bit of "shalom" for that work setting. Our company, Reell, had received many significant orders (100K plus) for "constant torque hinges" which were used to connect the keyboard with the screen of laptop computers. Each model required varying numbers of clips to determine the proper amount of torque. Anyway, it was a real pain to attach these clips and gave our engineering department "fits" as to how to do it efficiently. Because the company trained and encouraged our assemblers to resolve their own problems, one of them believed he needed to tell the engineering department how he believed they could create "tooling" to do it efficiently and with excellent quality. The idea was quite different from the direction, which the engineers were pursuing, BUT they were delighted with this idea from a "lowly" assembler and pursued it with great success.

Actually, this concept of subsidiarity probably originates quite a long time ago according to Scripture where in Genesis 1:28 it states, "God blessed them (Adam/Eve), and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the

fish of the sea and every living thing that moves upon the earth." It is that the Creator has equipped humankind to care for His beloved creation. Naturally, there is the need to teach and equip one another in the proper manner, but then ALL benefit when we trust them to speak and decide in resolving their problems.

There is significant challenge in this approach. Just as our Creator risked when He put creation in charge of "usins"; so too we risk the same when we trust others to make decisions about work issues we hold dear. The challenge is also to have the patience to allow those entrusted to make a mistake or two. Jesus's illustration of a mustard seed's growth is very appropriate here - starts out very small (insignificant), but becomes huge with time. (Matt13:31-2) Then, too, the challenge is to simply trust that colleagues, direct reports, etc. will do well because as has been said before: "God don't make no junk"!

With regard to "shalom", just imagine how this coworker from Reell felt about himself and those with whom he worked. Imagine, even if ever so briefly, the sense of significance, security, completeness and well-being he had with himself. Imagine also the feelings of harmony, energy, belonging and loyalty he had with those around him.

Have a blessed Christmas celebration and 'see' you next year!

- Jim Grubs

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